2003

Effects of residential learning communities, on -campus housing, and gender on students' perception of their living environment

Jennifer Benson Jones
College of William & Mary - School of Education

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wm.edu/etd

Part of the Higher Education Commons

Recommended Citation
https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.25774/w4-hjpr-fj47

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses, Dissertations, & Master Projects at W&M ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects by an authorized administrator of W&M ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@wm.edu.
EFFECTS OF RESIDENTIAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES,
ON-CAMPUS HOUSING, AND GENDER
ON STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THEIR LIVING ENVIRONMENT

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Education
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

by
Jennifer Benson Jones

May 2003
EFFECTS OF RESIDENTIAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES, ON-CAMPUS HOUSING, AND GENDER ON STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THEIR LIVING ENVIRONMENT

by

Jennifer Benson Jones

Approved May 2003 by

David W. Leslie, Ed.D.
Chairperson of Doctoral Committee

Thomas J. Ward, Ph.D.

John D. Foubert, Ph.D.
Table of Contents

Acknowledgements
List of Tables
List of Figures
ABSTRACT

Chapter One
Introduction
Purpose
Research Questions
Statement of the Problem
Significance of the Study
Limitations and Delimitations
Operational Definitions
Organization of the Study

Chapter Two
Review of Literature
Residential Learning Communities
Common Definitions
On-Campus Residential Living
Persistence and Academic Achievement
Intellectual and Cognitive Development
Openness to Diversity
Living and Learning Communities
Persistence and Academic Achievement
Intentional Grouping
Openness to Diversity
Perception of Experience
Summary

Chapter Three
Methodology
Introduction
Design of the Study
Independent Variables
Dependent Variables
Instrumentation
Individual Data Section
Description of the Student Residence Environment Scales
SRES Subscales
The Population and Setting
Data Collection Procedures
Data Analysis
Treatment of Data
Demographic Analysis
Score Analysis
Hypothesis
Analysis
Summary
Acknowledgements

Fifteen years ago, I moved into my freshman residence hall on the campus of Mankato State University. Little did I know that residence hall living would have such a profound impact on my personal and professional life. There are many people and experiences that have shaped my views, built my character, and given me the self-confidence, strength, and stamina to complete this research endeavor. I would like to take this opportunity to thank a few of those people who have played a particularly significant role in my personal and professional life.

I would like to thank my dissertation committee Dr. David W. Leslie (Committee Chair), Dr. Thomas J. Ward, and Dr. John D. Foubert for your guidance, support and flexibility. In particular, Dr. Leslie, whose patience, diligence and candid feedback, enabled me to complete this task. I will miss our “head-to-head” combat. As a student and as a professional, I have been blessed with countless mentors who taught me much about being a professional and caring for students. Jerry Olson. Frank Hoppe. Kevin Cannon, and Matthew Rader. As I pursued my education, so many friends and professionals encouraged me, opened doors for me, and helped me through the challenge of completing my doctoral study remotely. Lori Rader, Julie Sheldon Worms. Kathryn and Joe Tighe, Dr. Carlane J. Pittman, Dr. Charles Eberly, Dr. William Carter, III. Gwendolyn Pearson, Patricia Burleson, and Deborah Walker. In addition to those named, there are many other friends and colleagues who may not have always understood what I was doing, yet unrelentingly cheered me on. thank you.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank my family. To my parents, James and Charlene Benson, your enduring pride of me and love for me gave me the wings to fly.
Thank you for encouraging me to soar. To my sister Michelle Benson, brother, Matthew Benson, and sister-in-law Tammy Benson, your love and support are priceless to me. To my grandmother Edith Mae Gaspard, I strive to have half the strength and character that you do. To my father-in-law, Dr. John E. Jones, thank you for your constant encouragement. To my son, Cooper Benson Jones, you are too young to know what was going on around you, but your smile, your laughter, and your kisses made all the long nights bearable. I finished this for you. And finally to my husband, Dr. David Proctor Jones, you are my biggest fan, my faithful partner, my heart. Thank you for holding my hand, kicking my butt, and never giving up on our goal. Now let the fun begin!

There were so many times throughout the life of this project that it would have been easier to give up than to go on. But that would contradict the selfless dedication I learned from so many housing professionals. I believe in the impact that residence hall living has on students' lives. My hope is that this study will provide researchers and practitioners with a different lens to view program assessment and encourage others to continually assess and improve residential living communities for generations of students to come.
List of Tables

TABLE

1. Distribution of Respondents by Gender and Residence Hall Type ........... 41
2. Distribution of Respondents by Gender and Location ......................... 41
3. Residence Hall Type Scores Disaggregated by Subscales ..................... 44
4. Location Scores Disaggregated by Subscales ....................................... 45
5. Gender Scores Disaggregated by Subscales ........................................ 46
6. Multivariate Tests .................................................................................. 48
7. Univariate Tests .................................................................................... 49
8. Simple Effect of Location and Gender: Competition ............................. 52
9. Simple Effect of Location and Gender: Citizenship ............................... 53
10. Simple Effect of Location and Type: Student Input ............................. 58
11. Simple Effect of Location and Type: Stimulation ................................. 59
12. Subscale Effect Sizes .......................................................................... 67
13. Greatest Effect sizes Organized by Subscale ....................................... 71
## List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIGURE</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Diagram of the Student Residence Environment Scales</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Two-Way Interaction: Competition</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Two-Way Interaction: Citizenship</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Two-Way Interaction: Rule Enforcement</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Two-Way Interaction: Citizenship</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Two-Way Interaction: Residential Involvement</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Two-Way Interaction: Privacy</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Two-Way Interaction: Student Input</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Two-Way Interaction: Student Input</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Main Effect: Tolerance of Diversity</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Main Effect: Emotional Support</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Main Effect: Staff Support</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Main Effect: Tolerance of Diversity</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Main Effect: Emotional Support</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EFFECTS OF RESIDENTIAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES,
ON-CAMPUS HOUSING, AND GENDER
ON STUDENTS’ PERCEPTION OF THEIR LIVING ENVIRONMENT

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore differences in the perception of residential living experiences between students living in residential learning communities and those living in traditional residence halls. These two groups were further disaggregated based on their living environment location, on- or off-campus, and their gender. The quality of experience was based on students’ perception of their living environment assessed using the Student Residence Environment Scales.

The participants in this study were undergraduate students at a large southeastern public Research I institution enrolled as full-time status students. The on-line survey solicited 600 usable responses (35% usable response rate). Of that total, 225 students lived in university owned and operated on-campus residence halls and 375 lived in the privately-owned off-campus residence halls.

Results of this study show that differences do exist between students living in residential learning communities and those living in traditional residence hall environments; however those differences are contingent upon the location of students’ residence hall and gender. Location of residence hall and gender impact students’ perceptions of their living environment in an interactive relationship with the type of residence hall.
Recommendations for further research included: a replication of this study on multiple campuses to obtain a norm for responses; qualitative data gathering for greater understanding of students' experiences; and exploration of the differences between university-owned residence halls and privately-owned residence halls.

Recommendations for practitioners included: annual assessment of residential learning communities; and conduct multivariate analysis for a greater understanding of the multiple variables impacting students' perception.

JENNIFER BENSON JONES
EDUCATIONAL POLICY, PLANNING AND LEADERSHIP
THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY IN VIRGINIA
EFFECTS OF RESIDENTIAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES,
ON-CAMPUS HOUSING, AND GENDER
ON STUDENTS’ PERCEPTION OF THEIR LIVING ENVIRONMENT
Chapter One

Introduction

Historically, the American public accepted at face value the claims made by colleges and universities about the quality and effectiveness of higher education (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991). However, the rising cost of a college education, state budget crises, and declines in economic competitiveness at home and abroad, has made higher education lose its place as a sacred priority for public funding (Graham and Cockriel, 1989; Ewell, 1991; McClenney, 1993). As a result, institutions are required to make difficult choices and programs that are not seen as central to the institution’s academic mission are at risk of being eliminated (Ender, 1996).

The American College Personnel Association (1994) The Student Learning Imperative: Implications for Student Affairs (SLI) and the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land Grant Universities (1997) sent similar messages to the higher education community that the key to enhancing student learning is to create a tighter coupling between students in-and out-of-class experiences. Campus residence halls represent a potentially powerful venue for integrating students’ diverse curricular and co-curricular experiences (Marchese, 1994; Pike, 1997). The educational potential of residence halls is a product of the fact that a substantial number of college students live in residence halls and the fact that residence halls provide educators with extended opportunities to influence students (Schroeder and Mable, 1994; Pike, Schroeder, and Berry 1997). Additionally, campus residence halls provide one locale in which many of the college experiences that lead to gains in learning and intellectual development can
converge (Schroeder and Mable, 1994). Not only do students spend a substantial amount of time in their residence halls, opportunities for involvement in extracurricular activities and interaction with peers flourish.

Research has provided empirical support for the importance of assisting students in integrating curricular and co-curricular experiences (Pike, 1997). Studies have found that students' gains in general education and intellectual development are the product of a variety of factors, including coursework and effort in studying, involvement in out-of-class activities, and interaction with faculty and peers (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991; Astin, 1993; Kuh, Vesper, Connolly, and Pace, 1997). Living in a residence hall, as opposed to living off-campus, is positively associated with higher levels of achievement, cognitive development, and persistence. The greatest gains in learning and intellectual development are found when residence hall environments are structured to reinforce classroom experience (Schroeder, 1994). However, a clear link between living in residence halls and achievement as measured by grades is largely inconclusive (Blimling, 1993, 1999).

Because of that lack of a clear link between living in a residence hall and enhanced student learning, many institutions have attempted to create environments that are explicitly designed to promote student learning and intellectual development (Schroeder and Hurst, 1993). These residential learning communities are attempts to create environments, which promote higher levels of student involvement in out-of-class activities, create interaction between faculty and students, and a more supportive peer environment (Astin, 1993; Schroeder, 1994; Schroeder and Hurst, 1996; Terenzini, Pascarella, and Blimling, 1996). In general, students in residential learning communities.
for example, have higher levels of academic achievement (i.e. grades), cognitive development, and persistence than do students in traditional residence halls (Blimling, 1993; Pascarella, Terenzini, and Blimling, 1994; Terenzini, Pascarella, and Blimling, 1996, Pike, Schroeder, and Berry, 1997). However, more research is needed to justify the development of residential learning communities.

**Purpose**

The primary purpose of this study was to determine if a difference exists between how students residing in residential learning communities and those who live in traditional residence hall environments perceive their living environment using the 14 variable subscales on Student Residence Environment Scales.

**Research Questions**

The questions that guided this study were:

1. Does a difference exist in the quality of the residential living experience between students living in residential learning communities and those living in traditional residence hall settings as measured by the Student Residence Environment Scales?
   a. Is there a difference between those students living in an on-campus residence hall and those who live in an off-campus residence hall?
   b. Is there a difference between men and women based on their living environment?
2. In what ways, as measured by the individual Student Residence Environment Sub-Scales, does the residential experience of students living in residential learning communities differ from students living in traditional residence halls?

3. On which of the SRES subscales do the independent groups differ most?

Statement of the Problem

This study sought to investigate the relationship between students' involvement in residential learning communities and their perception of the quality of their living environment as measured by the Student Residence Environment Scales (SRES) (Winston, Johnstone, Long, McFarland, & Bledsoe, 1994). Their perceptions were compared to those of their peers who reside in traditional residence halls. The data was analyzed to examine the interaction and main effects of the three independent variables: location of residence hall, type of residence hall, and gender.

Significance of the Study

Changing priorities on campus and limited resources, along with rhetoric suggesting ways to develop campus community and a seamless relationship between student affairs and academic affairs, have promoted the development of residential learning communities (Ender, Newton and Caple, 1996; Kuh, Douglas, Lund, and Ramin-Gyruenk, 1994; Schroeder and Mable, 1994). However, research is still inconclusive as to whether students in residential learning communities have a difference experience than those living in tradition residence halls.
It was anticipated that the results of this study would provide a clearer picture of students' perception of their experience living in residential learning communities and contribute to the body of literature on residential learning communities.

**Limitations and Delimitations**

There were certain limitations of this study.

1. The study was a limited survey of one campus in the state of North Carolina. Because of this limitation, it may not be possible to make generalizations about residential learning communities at all universities across the country.

2. The study was also limited to the respondents' personal perceptions and responses to the 150-item Student Residence Environment Scales questionnaire.

3. The off-campus population in this study is an atypical off-campus population. Therefore, results of this study cannot be extrapolated to all off-campus populations.

4. This study uses a collection of different types of residential learning communities. Although the overall goals of the residential learning communities are the same, this study does not account for the unique differences among the individual residential learning communities.

5. The Student Residence Environment Scales (SRES) is an underused instrument and previous research on a similar population does not exist. Therefore norms not available to determine how students in this study compare to other students in similar environments.
Operational Definitions

This section identifies definitions specific to the purposes of this study.

Residential Learning Community: A residential learning community is a structured environment designed to promote higher levels of student involvement in out-of-class activities, create interaction between faculty and students, and a supportive peer environment. These environments are created in existing residence hall space, either a separate floor or wing, set apart from students not in the living community. Students choose to live in residential learning communities. The institution being studied provides nine on-campus residential learning communities, involving approximately 600 students. The off-campus residential learning communities involve approximate 400 students. In general, participants can expect to make a commitment of 2-4 hours each week, meet on a regular basis with the group, plan and participate in seminars and group discussions, lead social events, interact with faculty, and evaluate the progress toward completion of the program itself. Each community, in cooperation with the faculty advisory, is responsible for carrying out the goals set by its members.

Traditional Residence Hall: In this study, traditional residence halls are living units that house undergraduate and/or graduate students with no formal academic program focus or theme. Each floor has a student Residence Assistant who organizes social and educational events.

On-Campus Residence Hall: A university owned and operated residence hall that is located within the boundaries of campus property, housing undergraduate and graduate
students. On-campus residence halls are managed by a full-time professional staff, employed by the university. The institution being studied has 29 residence halls, housing approximately 7000 students.

**Off-Campus Residence Hall**: A privately owned and operated residence hall, located outside of the campus property, housing undergraduate and graduate students who attend the university. Off-campus residence halls are managed by full-time staff, employed by a private housing company. The off-campus residence hall in this study houses 1300 students in three towers geographically adjacent to one another.

**Student Residence Environment Scales (SRES)**: The SRES is an instrument that allows students to evaluate their residence hall experiences. The 150-item survey categorizes students experience on 14 subscales. This instrument was developed under the leadership of Dr. Roger Winston at the University of Georgia. (Winston, R.B., Johnstone, B.J., Long, J.C., McFarland, M.L., & Bledsoe, T., 1994).

**Organization of the Study**

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one is the introductory chapter and includes the statement of the problem and the guiding questions, the purposes of the study, the significance of the study and the operational definitions of key terms. Chapter two contains a review of relevant literature on residential learning communities. Chapter three describes the methodology. Chapter four shares the results of the data collection.
Chapter five contains the discussion, areas for future research, and implications for practice.

Summary

The goal of this study was to determine if a difference existed in the quality of male and female students' living experience in four different residence hall environments. It was expected that students would have different experiences based on their living environment.
Chapter Two

Review of Literature

This chapter summarizes the findings of the literature related to residential learning communities. The chapter is divided into three major sections: 1) a discussion of the definition and theory behind residential learning communities; 2) a summary of studies related to living in campus residence halls, and 3) a review of literature examining the impact residential learning communities on college students.

Residential Learning Communities

Common Definitions

Residential learning communities can be designed to accomplish a number of important educational objectives (Gabelnick, MacGregor, Matthews, and Smith, 1990): Common Interest Curricular Experiences, Multicultural Learning Communities, Service Learning Communities, and Freshman-Experience Learning Living are just a few examples (Schroeder, 1994). Although their names and detailed objectives may be different, the fundamental focus is to develop a sense of shared community within a residence hall environment that promotes and fosters learning.

Astin (1985) defines residential learning communities as “small sub-groups of students…characterized by a common sense of purpose…that can be used to build a sense of group identity, cohesiveness, and uniqueness that encourages continuity and the integration of diverse curricular and co-curricular experiences” (p. 161). Residential
learning communities are created to provide a multifaceted approach to aiding in the development of college students (Rice & Lightsey, 2001). In addition to the activities commonly found in traditional residence halls, living and learning communities generally include more structured programs of study skills and subject matter mastery workshops, faculty mentors, informal faculty interactions, and community and campus social activities (Schroeder & Hurst, 1996). Though some scholars believe that faculty involvement is not necessary (Riker, 1965), it is generally agreed that these programs have an academic focus and that faculty involvement is vital (Schroeder, 1994; Welty, 1976).

Another important component of residential learning communities is student involvement. As students' involvement increases, and theoretically they benefit more from their educational experience (Astin, 1992, 1997). Effective learning communities are characterized by a high degree of student influence, control, and ownership (Schroeder, 1994). “Students matter. They are central to the enterprise, and their participation in a variety of roles is essential.” (p. 167). According to Schlossberg (1989), involvement and mattering are linked in a critical fashion. Schlossberg’s Theory of Marginality and Mattering (1989) refers to the interactive concept that student’s perception of their importance and value to the community fluctuates. Learning is optimized when students feel that the community values them. Learning communities are also characterized by students who share common interests and purposes, high degrees of social interaction, and social stability that ensures continuity of relationships (Blimling & Schuh, 1981; Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 1991).
The physical element of residential learning communities also varies among campuses. The learning communities are typically housed within the current residence hall structures. Many campus residence halls were built more than 20 years ago and have certain architectural features that can inhibit the development of effective learning communities. Stark institutional atmospheres, isolated and inaccessible “group rooms”, and long and narrow double-loaded corridors often combined to isolate students rather than encourage their social interaction and group identity (Schroeder, 1980, 1981). Such physical constraints can be overcome by expecting students to personalize their physical environment by painting and decorating, and providing centrally located group lounges (Schroeder, 1994). Often a learning community will occupy a floor or certain section of a traditional residence hall, therefore they share the same physical space with traditional residence hall environments, but their programmatic focus sets them apart.

To summarize, residential communities are characterized by a high degree of student involvement, common interests and purposes, social interaction, and faculty involvement. Additionally, students know they matter and are a significant members of the community.

Theoretical Models

A variety of theories and models have been advanced to explain why residence hall in general, and residential learning communities in particular, enhance student learning. Taken as a whole, theory and research suggests that at least three factors are associated with higher levels of learning and intellectual development for students living in residential learning communities (Pike, 1997). First, research shows that students
living in residential learning communities tend to have greater opportunities for involvement in educationally purposeful activities outside the classroom (Astin, 1993; Schroeder, 1994; Schroeder and Hurst, 1996). Second, residential learning communities generally offer students greater opportunities to interact with faculty and peers, and the intellectual content of these interactions tends to be greater for students in residential learning communities than for any other group (Lacy, 1978; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1980; Astin, 1993; Pike, Schroeder, and Berry, 1997). Third, residential learning communities tend to facilitate students' integration of diverse curricular and co-curricular experiences (Schroeder, 1994; Schroeder and Hurst, 1996). In part, higher levels of integration are the product of higher levels of involvement and interaction (Blimling, 1993; Terenzini, Pascarella, and Blimling, 1996); however, at least some of the gains in integration are the direct result of the social and intellectual environment of the learning communities themselves (Tinto and Goodsell, 1993; Pike, Schroeder, and Berry 1997).

Pike (1997) suggests a theoretical model that assumes that students' gains in learning and intellectual development are a product of three factors: involvement, interaction, and integration. Also consistent with previous theory and research, involvement and integration are assumed to directly affect students' integration of their curricular and co-curricular experiences. Learning and intellectual development are influenced by student's pre-college characteristics, including gender, ethnicity, and entering academic ability. These pre-college characteristics may also influence involvement and integration, as well as integration of in- and out-of class experiences (Pike, 1997).
Currently, no one model or theory is held to be the absolute for the development and assessment of residential learning communities. However, as shown above, the overarching themes of involvement, integration, and interaction are consistent with current theory and research.

On-Campus Residential Living

After WWII there was an influx of students attending institutions of higher education forcing colleges and universities to accommodate new students with living space and challenging administrators to hire staff to provide out-of-class services. During this post war era, on-campus living changed from a dormitory environment, run by housemothers, where students basically ate and slept, to living and learning residence hall communities facilitated by student affairs professionals, where all aspects of students' growth and development received attention. This shift in focus and view of residence halls sparked a significant amount of research and interest in the benefits of campus living environments versus commuting.

When compared to commuters, residence hall students have shown increases in self-esteem, ego development, persistence in college, educational aspirations, and satisfaction with the college experience (Blimling, 1999; Chickering, 1974; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Furthermore, gains in intellectual orientation, academic performance, personal efficacy, academic and social self-confidence, social self-concept, and critical thinking skills have been identified with residential education (Blimling, 1993; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Kuh, Schuh, & Whitt & Associates, 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Increases in academic and social
involvement, academic and social integration, quality and quantity of information interaction with faculty and peers, time spent on campus and sense of community. may account for many of the positive effect of living on campus (Astin, 1993; Blimling, 1993; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Schroeder & Hurst, 1996; Terenzini, Pascarella & Blimling, 1999). Although research supports that living on-campus is beneficial, it is less clear as to exactly what components of residence life programs account for such positive effects (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

Persistence and Academic Achievement

Astin (1973) studied freshmen that entered college in 1966. He broke the groups into three categories: students living in residence halls, students living at home, and students living in other dwellings. He reports that students living in residence halls or private apartments were more likely to attain higher grades and apply to graduate school than students living at home. Astin also found that residence hall students were less likely to drop out of college then their off-campus counterparts. Astin identified a limitation of his study being the changing nature of residence halls during the mid-1960's.

Blimling (1989) completed a meta-analysis of 21 studies on the influence of college residence halls on academic performance published between 1966-1987. He determined that studies which concluded that residential students have a greater advantage over commuter students tended to lack for controls over pre-college differences in academic performance. In those that did control for previous academic achievement, no statistically significant differences existed between residence hall and
commuter students. Therefore, Blimling concluded that students living in residence halls have neither an advantage nor a disadvantage compared to commuters.

**Intellectual and Cognitive Development**

There is inconclusive and indirect evidence regarding the cognitive effects of living on campus versus commuting to college (Pascarella et al., 1993). Most evidence on the intellectual influence of residence relies on the grade point average and the assumption that academic achievement is validly represented by this statistic. The authors disagree with the notion that grades are the sole indicator of intellectual and cognitive development and based their study on the freshman year gains in reading comprehension, mathematical reasoning, and critical thinking of students as measured by pre- and post-first-year examinations. Studying a sample of 210 freshmen from a population of 25,000 in a large urban research university, controlling for pre-college cognitive ability, academic motivation, age, work responsibilities, and extent of enrollment. Pascarella et al. found that residential students made larger gains on measures of critical thinking and reading comprehension than commuter students, although there were no statistically significant differences in mathematics reasoning.

Noting that residence halls were usually overlooked as part of the educational system, Chickering and Kuper (1971) made an effort to determine the effect of living arrangements on student experience. Comparing educational outcomes between commuters and residents, they found that residents developed an “intellectual disposition” more frequently than commuters. Chickering and Kuper also concluded that
students who chose to live in residence halls tended to be higher achieving and more privileged prior to entering college than those who chose to live off campus (1971).

Referencing Chickering’s previous studies, Welty measured the impact of living situations on freshmen intellectual and personal growth. Welty’s research demonstrated that residence hall students develop on selected measures of intellectual growth to a greater degree than commuting students, but other college experiences were important in facilitating student development than residence hall living (Welty, 1976). These experiences included the “number of new student friendships formed during the freshman year, the amount and quality of student-faculty interactions, and the amount of interaction with administrators” (p. 468). Welty implied that residence hall students gained more opportunities than commuters to develop these relationships and suggested that universities should develop programs and experiences for commuter students that would provide them with increased opportunities to interact with others and develop similar types of relationships.

Inman studied the connection between residential living and the development of critical thinking skills (1997) and found that by properly controlling for pre-college characteristics and abilities, “residence during college did not significantly contribute to the explained variation in the end of freshman year critical thinking” (p. 13). In explaining that this finding is inconsistent with previous research (e.g. Pascarella et al. 1993, Welty, 1976, as cited in Inman, p. 13), she pointed out bias in the earlier sample groups: “These figures show a strong representation of predominantly commuter institutions in the sample in spite of the resident/commuter balance in the survey respondents from these institutions” (1997, p. 14). Inman did find a positive coefficient
for extracurricular involvement, indicating that extracurricular college experiences do contribute to cognitive development during college (p. 14-5). She concluded with hopeful news for commuter students, suggesting that living off campus does not limit cognitive growth, and that through extracurricular involvement, commuters can exhibit similar cognitive gains to students living in residence halls.

**Openness to Diversity**

Campus residence halls provide a potentially powerful environment for encouraging openness to diversity because of extended opportunities for students to interact with peers and staff to implement programs that expose students to multicultural issues (Hughes, 1994; Pike, 2002). Not surprising, previous studies found that living on campus, as opposed to commuting from home, was related to increased tolerance and openness to diversity (Astin, 1977, 1993; Blimling, 1993; Chickering, 1975; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991; Pascarella, Terenzini, and Blimling, 1994). Although these studies found that the effects of living on campus were consistently positive, the strength of the effects varied widely, due to substantial differences in the length, content, and nature of the residential experience (Pascarella et al., 1994).

**Living and Learning Communities**

Research on the impact of residence hall living evaluates the outcomes for students living in special housing including programs for first-year students. Students receive more benefits from residing in a living and learning community than living in conventional residence halls (Blimling, 1993; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Terenzini.
Pascarella & Blimling, 1999; Schroeder & Mable, 1994; Pike, Schroeder, & Berry, 1997). Better academic performance, greater gains in education, enhanced personal development, increased academic self-concept, a more intellectual climate, and generally a positive social climate are found in living and learning communities (Blimling, 1993; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Terenzini, Pascarella & Blimling, 1999; Schroeder & Mable, 1994; Pike, Schroeder, & Berry, 1997).

**Persistence and Academic Achievement**

Conclusions about the impact of living and learning programs on student learning are typically made using study results that compare living-learning participants to students who reside in conventional residence halls. Pascarella and Terenzi (1991) find “that membership in a living and learning residence rather than in conventional residence halls has a statistically significant positive influence on freshman-to-sophomore persistence” (p. 401). In a later study, Schroeder and Berry (1997) compared persistence rates of students who participated in faculty led, freshman interest groups with students who are not exposed to interest groups in their residence hall and found that the intentional learning community were associated with a higher level of persistence.

“Research generally indicates that students residing in an environment where living and learning are explicitly blended show more autonomy, intellectualism, and personal growth” (Smith, 1993, p. 249; Schroeder, et al. 1994).

Pike, Schroeder, and Berry (1997) examined the relationship between residential learning communities and students’ experiences and persistence during the first year of college. Residential learning communities did not directly improve students’ persistence.
rates, however, they did discover that the learning communities indirectly enhanced persistence by significantly increasing faculty-student interaction and enhancing the importance of faculty-student interaction to persistence.

A recent study on first-year persistence (Berger, 1997) showed that persistence was affected by a student's sense of community in the residence halls. The conclusions that are drawn from this study were limited by the fact that persistence was not based on re-enrollment, but rather, was determined by students' own assessments about their plans to continue in school.

**Intentional Grouping**

Several studies have explored the impact that particular programmatic approaches to residence halls have on students (Williams and Reilley, 1972). Citing Riker (1965), they believe that students behavior is influenced due to the time that they spend in residence halls. "If the climate within these buildings is largely anti-intellectual...the role of residence units ought to be of great concern to administrators and faculty because of the substantial amount of student exposure" (p. 403). DeCoster (1968) found that placing high-ability students together enhanced their self-reported educational success, more so for men than for women (as cited in Williams & Reilley, p. 403). Schoemer and McConnell (1970) studied the effects of assigning first-year women to three different types of residence hall environments: all first-year women, coed first-year halls, and all undergraduate halls. the results indicated that women in all undergraduate halls achieved greater academic success than those in halls with all first-year students or in coed first-year halls.
Williams and Reilly's (1972) research found that, for colleges and universities that grouped students together in classrooms and residence halls, roommates enrolled in the same class together earned significantly higher grades. Newcomb (1966) calls this utilizing the potent peer group influence in academic matters. Students who attend classes together and live together tend to provide mutual support in studying together, sharing notes, and communicating to each other about relevant course deadlines. Vreeland concluded from a longitudinal study of Harvard houses that students considered the house only a place to live, not "an intellectual community with important consequences for the education in the broadest sense" (cited in Williams & Reilly, 1972, p. 408).

Comparison studies between different living environments on campus suggest that academic achievement can vary depending on the living environment. High-ability students who were assigned to live with other high-ability students perform better than high-ability students assigned at random (Blimling, 1993). These studies conclude that high ability students matched in the same living environment create a peer culture that supports and promotes academic achievement. Similarly, students who lived on floors that enforced quiet hours to promote studying have been shown to perform better academically than students who live on conventional residence hall floors (Blimling & Hample, 1979).

Crew and Giblette (1965) examined the impact of grouping college freshmen by academic major at one institution. They compared academic performance of freshmen male roommates enrolled in required courses with the total freshman population at the University of Maryland. The researchers concluded that roommates taking the same
courses earn significantly higher grades than the general freshman population.

Morishima (1966) also studied the effects of assigning students to residences by academic major. He used two experimental groups and one control group in the study. The two experimental groups taking the same major course of study were assigned to rooms in one wing of the residence hall; the control group was scattered throughout the hall. Results of the study indicated no significant differences in scholastic achievement between the two groups, however, the experimental group showed a greater increase in "scholastic orientation." Contrary to the previous two studies, Grosz and Brandt (1969) investigated the effects of grouping students with others majoring in similar educational areas, found that housing students with the same academic major together has little influence on grades earned by students during their first semester in college.

In his review, Blimling (1993, 1999) explored the significance of outcomes experienced by first-year students housed in first-year experience programs. He found that the results were mixed: Some studies determined that students in first-year experience programs received higher grades than first-year students assigned to live with upper division students, while other studies found the opposite to be true (Blimling, 1993). Blimling stated:

"The homogeneous assignment of first-year students may created a somewhat more secure environment for new students. Because first-year students often share many of the same basic courses, the opportunity for informal tutoring among these students, through the formation of the study group networks, is also a factor. These associations may assist students in their academic performance" (1993, p. 269).
Special programs during the first-year help students to gain strong educational outcomes during what some researchers believe to be the most crucial year for development (Blimling, 1993, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). In a review of research on critical thinking, Pascarella cited a study by Lehmann (1963), which showed that the greatest gains in critical thinking ability occur between the beginning and end of the first year.

**Involvement and Integration**

Residential learning communities attempt to create environments which promote higher levels of student involvement in out-of-classroom activities, greater interaction between faculty and students, and a more supportive peer environment (Astin, 1993; Schroeder, 1994; Schroeder and Hurst, 1996; Terenzini, Pascarella, and Blimling, 1996). Effects of residential learning communities tend to be indirect, acting through involvement and interaction with faculty and peers (Lacy, 1978; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1980, 1981; Pike, Schroeder, and Berry, 1997). Specifically, Pike, Schroeder, and Berry (1997), found that living in a residential community seems to alter many of the relationships between college experiences and educational outcomes. They further observed that differences in relationships among college experiences and educational outcomes may invalidate comparisons across groups.

Pike (1997) conducted a study of students at the University of Missouri-Columbia and found that students in residential learning communities have substantially higher levels of involvement, interaction, and integration, and gains in general education than did traditional residence hall students. Also, the effects of residential living arrangements
tended to be more pronounced for measures of involvement and interaction than for measures of integration and gains.

Based on limited research, students living in residential learning communities tend to be more involved and integrated with their residential and university community. However, attributing that outcome directly to their involvement in a residential community is difficult as residential learning communities typically require students to self-select into the program. Students' who would choose to be involved in a special living community, would also have the personality that would choose to be involved and integrated into other aspects of residential and community life (Lacy, 1978; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1980, 1981; Astin, 1993; Schroeder, 1994; Schroeder and Hurst, 1996; Terenzini, Pascarella, and Blimling, 1996. Pike, Schroeder, and Berry, 1997).

Openness to Diversity

The greatest gains in openness to diversity occurred when residence hall environments were designed to encourage positive interactions among residents about multicultural issues (Blimling, 1993; Hughes, 1994; Pascarella et al., 1994). Lacy (1978) found that students in living-learning communities at the University of Michigan interacted more frequently with faculty, staff, and other students than students living in traditional residence halls. More interaction, in turn, was associated with greater gains in liberalism and tolerance. In two studies, Pascarella and Terenzini (1980, 1981) found that students in living-learning communities, as compared to students in traditional residence halls, reported significantly greater gains in openness to new ideas. Pascarella
and Terenzini also found that the positive effects of living-learning communities were an indirect result of high levels of involvement and interaction with diverse peers.

Pike (2002) examined the effects of students' living arrangements on their tolerance and openness to diversity at the end of the first year of college. Using four different living arrangements, (1) off campus, (2) traditional residence halls, (3) sponsoring learning communities, and (4) freshman interest groups. He found that students living on campus, irrespective of where they lived on campus, were more open to diversity.

Perception of Experience

Evidence supports the idea that living on-campus provides students a greater opportunity to persist in college and have greater academic, personal, and cognitive gains than their counterparts who do not live on-campus. In turn, students involved in living and learning communities have the potential for greater gains than their peers living in traditional residence hall settings. What remains unclear is how students' perception of their living environment impacts their residence hall and university experience. Williams and Reilly (1972) concluded that students view their residence hall environment and university experience in similar ways: "A comprehensive residence hall program therefore may improve students' perceptions of the total university environment" (p. 409). Therefore, it would stand to reason that understanding students' perceptions of community would benefit not only the residence hall environments, but the university community as a whole. To support this finding, Berger (1997) conducted a longitudinal study of first year students and found that the "intent to reenroll shows that sense of
community in the residence halls is an important link to subsequent institutional commitment and persistence” (p. 450).

Tinto (1993) described the process of becoming integrated into the college environment as a transition “between membership in past communities and membership in the new communities of the college” (p. 125). He asserts that every campus is comprised of multiple communities, any one of which could provide a way for a student to integrate into campus life. Although many studies have documented the effects that sense of community has on the workplace, cities, neighborhoods, hospital wards, religious congregations, and unions (Lounsbury & DeNuie, 1995); little empirical work exists on the effect that sense of community has on college campuses, and more specifically on on-campus residence halls. Despite the calls for creating community on campus, the role that on-campus living and learning communities play in fostering students’ perception of their living environment remains unexplored.

Summary

This study intended to contribute to current literature on residential learning communities. Although several studies exist telling of positive impacts of residential learning communities, findings are inconclusive as to the degree in which residential learning communities impact students academic achievement, persistence and involvement. Additionally, current studies do not seek out students’ perceptions of their environment and experience. This study will draw conclusions about residential learning communities based on students’ perceptions.
Chapter Three
Methodology

Introduction

Chapter three describes the proposed methods and procedures to identify the effects of residential learning communities on students' perception of their residential living environment. This chapter contains a discussion of the design of the study, a description of the population, a description of the research instrument, and the proposed methods to analyze data.

Design of the Study

The questions that guided this study were:

1. Does a difference exist in the quality of the residential living experience between students living in residential learning communities and those living in traditional residence hall settings as measured by the Student Residence Environment Scales?
   a. Is there a difference between those students living in an on-campus residence hall and those who live in an off-campus residence hall?
   b. Is there a difference between men and women based on their living environment?

2. In what ways, as measured by the individual Student Residence Environment Sub-Scales, does the residential experience of students living in residential learning communities differ from students living in traditional residence halls?
3. On which of the SRES subscales do the independent groups differ most?

**Independent Variables**

The independent variables for this study are as follows:

1. Location of Residence Hall
   a. On-Campus Residence Hall: A university owned and operated residence hall on-campus.
   b. Off-Campus Residence Hall: A privately owned and operated residence hall off-campus.

2. Type of Residence Hall
   a. Residential Learning Community: A residence hall location where students self-select into a residential learning community.
   b. Traditional Residence Hall: A residence hall location that does not have a formal residential learning community and students are randomly assigned to a living environment.

3. Gender
   a. Male
   b. Female

**Dependent Variables**

The dependent variables in this study were the scores on the 14 subscales of the Student Residence Environment Scales.
Instrumentation

The instrument used in this study is the Student Residence Environment Scales (SRES). The SRES is an instrument that allows students to evaluate their residence hall experiences in a structured manner. Roger B. Winston, University of Georgia, developed the survey in 1995 with a class of graduate students. Several studies were done using the SRES, however only one was published (R. Winston, personal conversation, 2003).

Individual Data Section

An individual data section preceded the SRES survey to gather information about selected characteristics of the respondents. The individual data section differed slightly between on-campus students (Appendix A) and off-campus students (Appendix B). The variables and the definitions for each were the following:

Residence Hall: referred to the residence hall in which the students reside. This variable was measured by asking respondents to select the name of their residence hall.

Living Unit: referred to the type of residential environment in which students reside. This variable was measured by asking respondents to select from a list of residential learning programs. For example: “Regular Residence Hall”, “French House”, “First Year Initiative.” Respondents had a total of 13 choices.

Class: referred to the respondents’ academic class. The variable was measured by asking respondents to select “First Year Student”, “Sophomore”, “Junior”, “Senior”, or “Graduate Student.”

Gender: referred to the sex of the respondents. This variable was measured by asking respondents to select “male” or “female”.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
**Semesters in Current Living Environment**: referred to the number of consecutive semesters the respondents have lived in their current living environment. This variable was measured by asking the respondents to choose 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, or 8 or more.

**Returning to Community**: referred to respondents choosing to live in the same living unit for the following academic year. This variable was measured by asking respondents to choose either "yes" or "no".

Other questions were present in the individual data section that are not germane to this study but will be used by the host institution.

**Description of the Student Residence Environment Scales**

The Student Residence Environment Scales (SRES) (Appendix C) is an instrument that allows students to evaluate their residence hall experiences in a structured manner. The 150-item questionnaire consists of a series of statements that describe various possible characteristics of the residence hall and those who live there. Respondents rate each item on a 4-point Likert-type scale, from the following answers: never true, almost never true, almost always true, always true (Winston, Johnstone, Long, McFarland, & Bledsoe, 1994).

Each of the 150 survey questions sorts students experience into 14 subscales. The 14 subscales include: care of facilities, privacy, cohesiveness, stimulation, citizenship, residential involvement, mattering, emotional support, and academic achievement, rule enforcement, student input, staff support, competition, and tolerance of diversity. Reliability data exists for the 14 subscales, with a range from .66 to .85 (Winston, 1994).
SRES Subscales

The 14 subscales have been factor analyzed into three broader dimensions (See Figure 1). Below, the 14 subscales are further defined according to their associated dimensions.

Physical Dimension

- Care of Facilities Scale: A high score indicated that residents perceive the living unit and its furnishings as well maintained, carefully and frequently cleaned, and promptly repaired.
- Privacy Scale: A high score indicated that residents perceive the facilities are configured so there is freedom from intrusion. Residents respect each other’s requests for personal time and space.

Psychosocial Dimension

- Cohesiveness Scale: A high score indicated that residents perceive the living unit as tight-nit and socially integrated, as inhabited by students who care about each other’s welfare, and as having frequent social contact with each other inside and outside the living unit.
- Stimulation Scale: A high score indicated that residents perceive the living unit as intellectually and socially exciting. Students are enthusiastic about unit-sponsored activities, perceive other residents as interesting, and find social interactions stimulating.
Figure 1. Diagram of the Student Residence Environment Scales
- Citizenship Scale: A high score indicated that residents perceive the living unit as inhabited by students who are concerned about each other's welfare, invested in the institution, and committed to providing service to the community.

- Residential Involvement Scale: A high score indicated that residents share a sense of personal identification with the unit and are active participants in the unit's activities.

- Mattering Scale: A high score indicated that residents perceive that everyone is important and that accomplishments are celebrated by the living unit. Residents show concern for each other and appreciate everyone's contributions.

- Emotional Support Scale: A high score indicated that residents perceive others in the living unit are willing to offer understanding, assistance, and encouragement in times of need.

- Academic Achievement Scale: A high score indicated that residents perceive grades and academic accomplishments are important. The unit values and publicly recognizes academic excellence.

**Organizational Engagement Dimension**

- Rule Enforcement Scale: A high score indicated that residents appreciate the need for order in the living unit, perceive residence hall policies and regulations as reasonable and appropriate, and perceive that rules are fairly and equitably applied.

- Student Input Scale: A high score indicated that residents perceive they have a voice and exert influence in the operation of the living unit, have freedom to
express candid opinions, and are consulted when important decisions are made within the unit.

- **Staff Support Scale**: A high score indicated that residents perceive that staff members are approachable, show care and concern for individuals' welfare, and are knowledgeable and readily available.

- **Competition Scale**: A high score indicated that residents perceive each other as rivals. Activities, relationships, and possessions are all seen in a competitive framework.

- **Tolerance of Diversity**: A high score indicated that residents perceive students in the living unit respect individual differences, eschew stereotypes based on ethnicity and sexual orientation, and have amicable interactions.

**The Population and Setting**

The participants in this study were undergraduate students at a large southeastern public Research I institution enrolled as full-time status students. The institution's total population at the time of this survey, academic year 2001 – 2002, was 25,480. of that 16,307 were classified as undergraduate students. The on-campus student population was 6,445 (3,936 females and 2,509 males). Of the total on-campus students, 480 students lived in residential learning communities. The number of students living in the off-campus residential environment totaled 1,323 (794 females, 529 males). Of the total off-campus students, 512 lived in residential learning communities.

Students resided in one of four residential living environments:
1. **On-Campus Residential Learning Community:** This group included students who live in on-campus, university owned and operated residence halls and have self-selected into a residential learning community.

2. **On-Campus Traditional Residence Hall:** This group included students who are randomly assigned to a residence hall location in an on-campus university owned and operated residence hall and are not involved in a formal residential learning community.

3. **Off-Campus Residential Learning Community:** This group included students who live in an off-campus privately owned and operated residence hall and have self-selected into a residential learning community.

4. **Off-Campus Traditional Residence Hall:** This group included students who are randomly assigned to a residence hall location in an off-campus privately owned and operated residence hall and are not involved in a formal residential learning community.

A total of 680 students responded to the survey, of which 600 were usable responses. Of that total, 225 students, 178 females and 47 males, live in university owned and operated on-campus residence halls. Students who resided in the privately owned off-campus residence halls totaled 375, of which 255 were females and 120 were males. The usable response rate was 35%. In both on- and off-campus populations, the overall response rate for men was lower than the overall ratio of men to women.
Data Collection Procedures

The survey was conducted in the spring of 2002. Participants in this study received an email from a professional residential life staff member, for both the on- and off-campus residential living environments requesting their participation in the survey. Directing students to an on-line survey, the message invited students to provide feedback about their living community in an effort to help the department improve the current living environments. All participants’ information was collected anonymously.

Data Analysis

The primary objective of this study was to determine if any differences, on variables measured by the SRES, exist between students living in residential learning communities and those living in traditional residence halls. Where differences existed, as determined by a MANOVA, then the second objective was to learn if residential learning communities, location of residence hall (on- or off-campus), and/or gender produce differences in any of the 14 variable SRES subscales. Finally, the study sought to determine which SRES sub-scales independent groups differed the most.

Treatment of Data

Data treatment included the reversal of negatively worded questions to enable the computation of sub-scores.
Demographic Analysis

Data was gathered from scores on the Individual Data sheet for the variables residence hall, living unit, class, gender, semesters in current living environment, and returning to community. The researcher provides description of the samples demographics and responses in chapter four.

Score Analysis

Next, computer generated data to assess the subscale means and other descriptive statistics is reported and SRES Likert Scale analyzed.

Hypothesis

The general hypothesis of this study was that a difference in perception of living environment exists between students living in residential learning communities and traditional residence hall settings. Additionally, a difference should exist among students perceptions based on the location of their living environment, on- or off-campus, and based on there gender, female or male. Residential learning community residents should score higher on subscales than traditional residence hall students, particularly on the subscales that constitute the psychosocial and organizational dimensions. Subscales such as cohesiveness, tolerance of diversity, and mattering are directly related to the goals of residential learning communities. The null hypothesis was that there would be no differences in SRES subscale scores between residential learning community residents and traditional residents, on- or off-campus students, and men and women.
Analysis

Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA)

In order to determine if a difference exists between students living in residential learning communities and those living in traditional residence hall settings, either on-campus or off-campus, and by gender, the researcher conducted a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). The MANOVA was a 2x2x2 (residence type, residence location, gender). MANOVA can protect against family-wise Type I errors that might occur when large numbers of contrasts are performed. A Post Hoc WSD was used to determine the simple effect in each of the 2-way interactions.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Any statistical differences detected in the MANOVA procedure were further tested by univariate ANOVAs. The MANOVA, for example may detect some differences among the 14 subscales due to residence type. The univariate ANOVA was used to follow through and locate specific subscales on which these differences occur.

Effect Size Analysis

Assuming differences on the SRES subscales may be attributed to the independent variables, an effect size analysis was used to determine the magnitude of differences between individual populations. To calculate the effect size, the following formula was used: Effect Size = Difference in Means / Standard Deviation of the Subscale.
Summary

There is an underlying assumption that students who live in residential learning communities will have a different quality of experience than their traditional residence hall counterparts. This perception can be parlayed into further assumptions about persistence, academic achievement, and cognitive development. However, little empirical evidence exists to support these assumptions. The goal of this study was to provide quantitative data that will provide greater understanding of how students perceive their residential experience based on their current living environment and on which specific elements of the SRES that students differ. If they differ in the quality of experience, further research would explore specific outcomes of residential learning communities.
Chapter Four

Analysis of Data

The purpose of this chapter is to present analyses of data that were collected in the study of student perceptions of their residence hall living environment. using the Student Residence Environment Scales (SRES). Data collected will provide answers to the research questions that guide this study. The first of these questions is whether a difference exists in the quality of the residential living experience between students living in residential learning communities and those living in traditional residence hall settings, students living in an on-campus residence hall and those who live in an off-campus residence hall, and differences between men and women as measured by the Student Residence Environment Scales. The second question asks in what ways, as measured by the individual Student Residence Environment Sub-Scales, does the residential experience of students living in residential learning communities differ from students living in traditional residence halls. And the final question seeks to determine on which of the SRES subscales independent groups differ most.

Demographic Analysis

This sample of 600 university students consists of more women (72.3%) than men (27.7%). Of those students who completed the survey, 56.7% live in traditional residence hall environments and 43.3% live residential learning communities (see Table 1). On-campus students comprise 37.5% of the sample and off-campus students make up 62.5% of the sample (Table 2).
Table 1

**Distribution of Respondents by Gender and Residence Hall Type**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Living Type</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential Learning Community</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Residence Hall</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

**Distribution of Respondents by Gender and Living Location**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Living Location</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On-Campus</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-Campus</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SRES Analysis

Scale Analysis

The SRES contained 150 items that measured 14 subscales evaluating aspects students’ residence hall experiences. The following 4-point Likert rating scale ranging from 1 – always true to 4 – never true was used in the survey.

1. Always True 1.00 – 1.74
2. Almost Always True 1.75 – 2.49
3. Almost Never True 2.50 – 3.24
4. Never True 3.25 – 4.00

Mean scores that range between 1.00 and 2.49 indicate that students perceive an aspect of their living environment to be always true or almost always true. For example, the overall mean score in the academic achievement subscale for students in residential learning communities is M = 2.40. Therefore, students in residential learning communities perceive the statement that grades and academic accomplishments are important, and that their living unit values and publicly recognizes academic excellence, as almost always true. Mean scores ranging from 2.50 to 4.00 suggest students perceive an aspect of their living environment as almost never true or never true. For example, students living in traditional residence halls have a mean score of M = 2.80 for the tolerance of diversity subscale. The tolerance of diversity subscale indicates that students’ respect individual differences, eschew stereotypes based on ethnicity and sexual orientation, and have amicable interactions. A mean score of M = 2.80 suggests that
students perceive their environment in regards to tolerance of diversity as almost never true.

**Descriptive Analysis**

Tables 3 through 5 show the raw mean scores for each of the three independent variables. The means are organized by type of residence hall (see Table 3), residence hall location (see Table 4), and gender (see Table 5) of students for each of the fourteen subscales.
Table 3
Residence Hall Type Scores Disaggregated by Subscales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscales</th>
<th>Residential Learning Community</th>
<th>Traditional Residence Hall</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Achievement</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>2.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care of Facilities</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>2.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesiveness</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>2.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Support</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>2.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Involvement</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>2.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mattering</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>2.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privacy</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>2.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rule Enforcement</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Input</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>2.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Support</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>2.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stimulation</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerance of Diversity</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>2.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subscales</td>
<td>On-Campus</td>
<td></td>
<td>Off-Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Achievement</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>2.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care of Facilities</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>2.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>2.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesiveness</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>2.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Support</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>2.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Involvement</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>2.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mattering</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>2.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privacy</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rule Enforcement</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Input</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>2.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Support</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>2.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stimulation</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerance of Diversity</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>2.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5

**Gender Scores Disaggregated by Subscales**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscales</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Achievement</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>2.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care of Facilities</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>2.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesiveness</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>2.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>2.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Support</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>2.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Involvement</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>2.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mattering</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>2.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privacy</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>2.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rule Enforcement</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>2.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Input</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>2.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Support</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>2.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stimulation</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerance of Diversity</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>2.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Multivariate Analysis

Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to address the first research question, testing for a difference between students' living experience based on type (residential learning communities or traditional residence halls), location (on-campus or off-campus), and gender (men or women). MANOVA allowed an examination of the differences that exist among the perceptions of the three groups (type, gender, location) in each of the 14 sub-scales of the Student Residence Environment Scales, while controlling for family-wise Type I errors.

A 2x2x2 (type, location, and gender) MANOVA showed significant differences (see Table 6) for each of the seven effects. The three-way interaction effect was significant for type, location, and gender (Wilks' \( \Lambda = .946, F(14, 579) = 2.347, p = .004 \)). Significant effects were also found for each of the two-way interactions; type and gender (Wilks' \( \Lambda = .920, F(14, 579) = 3.579, p < .000 \)), type and location (Wilks' \( \Lambda = .918, F(14, 579) = 3.684, p < .000 \)), and gender and location (Wilks' \( \Lambda = .907, F(14, 579) = 4.251, p < .000 \)). In addition, MANOVA determined significant differences in each of the three main effects: type (Wilks' \( \Lambda = .902, F(14, 579) = 4.487, p = .000 \)), location (Wilks' \( \Lambda = .864, F(14, 579) = 6.506, p = .000 \)), and gender (Wilks' \( \Lambda = .924, F(14, 579) = 3.418, p = .000 \)).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Hypothesis df</th>
<th>Error df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Wilks' Lambda</td>
<td>0.902</td>
<td>4.487</td>
<td>14.000</td>
<td>579.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Wilks' Lambda</td>
<td>0.924</td>
<td>3.418</td>
<td>14.000</td>
<td>579.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Wilks' Lambda</td>
<td>0.864</td>
<td>6.506</td>
<td>14.000</td>
<td>579.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type * Gender</td>
<td>Wilks' Lambda</td>
<td>0.920</td>
<td>3.579</td>
<td>14.000</td>
<td>579.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type * Location</td>
<td>Wilks' Lambda</td>
<td>0.918</td>
<td>3.684</td>
<td>14.000</td>
<td>579.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender * Location</td>
<td>Wilks' Lambda</td>
<td>0.907</td>
<td>4.251</td>
<td>14.000</td>
<td>579.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type * Gender * Location</td>
<td>Wilks' Lambda</td>
<td>0.946</td>
<td>2.347</td>
<td>14.000</td>
<td>579.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p < .05
Univariate Analysis

The subsequent univariate test further identifies the individual subscales, as measured by the Student Residence Environment Scales, where students’ experiences differ most significantly, addressing the second research question. The univariate tests revealed in Table 7 reflects only subscales that show a significant ($p < 0.05$) difference for each effect.

Table 7

Univariate Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type *</td>
<td>Academic Achievement</td>
<td>0.293</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.293</td>
<td>4.125</td>
<td>0.043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender *</td>
<td>Care of Facilities</td>
<td>0.970</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.970</td>
<td>4.952</td>
<td>0.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Cohesiveness</td>
<td>0.685</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.685</td>
<td>5.648</td>
<td>0.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender *</td>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>2.878</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.878</td>
<td>10.423</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>0.898</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.898</td>
<td>8.828</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rule Enforcement</td>
<td>3.140</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.140</td>
<td>23.943</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type *</td>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>0.577</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.577</td>
<td>5.678</td>
<td>0.017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Residential Involvement</td>
<td>0.602</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.602</td>
<td>6.212</td>
<td>0.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Privacy</td>
<td>0.978</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.978</td>
<td>3.893</td>
<td>0.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student Input</td>
<td>0.635</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.635</td>
<td>5.235</td>
<td>0.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stimulation</td>
<td>2.526</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.526</td>
<td>18.103</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type *</td>
<td>Student Input</td>
<td>0.549</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.549</td>
<td>4.529</td>
<td>0.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Emotional Support</td>
<td>1.013</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.013</td>
<td>5.170</td>
<td>0.023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff Support</td>
<td>1.319</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.319</td>
<td>10.278</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tolerance of Diversity</td>
<td>4.327</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.327</td>
<td>27.672</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Emotional Support</td>
<td>2.730</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.730</td>
<td>13.938</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Tolerance of Diversity</td>
<td>2.017</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.017</td>
<td>14.455</td>
<td>0.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Dependent Variable</td>
<td>Type III Sum of Squares</td>
<td>df</td>
<td>Mean Square</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>Academic Achievement</td>
<td>42.004</td>
<td>592</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.095E-02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Care of Facilities</td>
<td>115.985</td>
<td>592</td>
<td></td>
<td>.196</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>163.487</td>
<td>592</td>
<td></td>
<td>.276</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cohesiveness</td>
<td>71.823</td>
<td>592</td>
<td></td>
<td>.121</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>60.207</td>
<td>592</td>
<td></td>
<td>.102</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emotional Support</td>
<td>115.971</td>
<td>592</td>
<td></td>
<td>.196</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residential Involvement</td>
<td>57.354</td>
<td>592</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.688E-02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mattering</td>
<td>49.522</td>
<td>592</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.365E-02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Privacy</td>
<td>149.750</td>
<td>592</td>
<td></td>
<td>.251</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rule Enforcement</td>
<td>77.630</td>
<td>592</td>
<td></td>
<td>.131</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student Input</td>
<td>71.790</td>
<td>592</td>
<td></td>
<td>.121</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff Support</td>
<td>75.971</td>
<td>592</td>
<td></td>
<td>.128</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stimulation</td>
<td>82.601</td>
<td>592</td>
<td></td>
<td>.140</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tolerance of Diversity</td>
<td>92.563</td>
<td>592</td>
<td></td>
<td>.156</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Academic Achievement</td>
<td>3537.753</td>
<td>600</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Care of Facilities</td>
<td>2493.247</td>
<td>600</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>2823.259</td>
<td>600</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cohesiveness</td>
<td>2746.099</td>
<td>600</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>3235.963</td>
<td>600</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emotional Support</td>
<td>2666.111</td>
<td>600</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residential Involvement</td>
<td>3686.061</td>
<td>600</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mattering</td>
<td>4117.870</td>
<td>600</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Privacy</td>
<td>3040.328</td>
<td>600</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rule Enforcement</td>
<td>3816.440</td>
<td>600</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student Input</td>
<td>3567.679</td>
<td>600</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff Support</td>
<td>3039.545</td>
<td>600</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stimulation</td>
<td>2633.259</td>
<td>600</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tolerance of Diversity</td>
<td>4749.446</td>
<td>600</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Table reflects only sub-scales that have a significant (p < 0.05) difference.
Three-Way Interaction: Type, Location and Gender

In the three way interaction (type, location, and gender) students showed significant differences in the areas of Academic Achievement ($F = 4.125, p = .043$), Care of Facilities ($F = 4.953, p = .026$), and Cohesion (essiveness ($F = 5.648, p = .018$).
Two-Way Interaction: Location and Gender

The location and gender interaction reveals significant differences on three subscales (Figure 2). On the competition subscale ($F = 10.423, p = .001$), a low mean indicates that students' perceive each other as rivals and activities, relationships, and possessions are all seen in a competitive framework. The simple effects test (Table 8) shows that females on-campus perceive their environment to be the most competitive.

![Figure 2. Two-Way Interaction: Competition](image)

**Figure 2. Two-Way Interaction: Competition**

**Table 8**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>On-Campus</th>
<th>Off-Campus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Simple Effect of Location and Gender: Competition

1.83 2.18 2.23 2.25

A A A A
A low mean on the citizenship subscale \((F = 8.828, p = .003)\) indicates that students' perceive that their peers are concerned about each other's welfare, invested in the institution, and committed to providing service to the community. Figure 3 illustrates the 2-way interaction. The simple effects test (Table 9) shows that females living on-campus perceive their living environment to assume the characteristics of citizenship more than any other group.

![Figure 3. Two-Way Interaction: Citizenship](image)

Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Simple Effect of Location and Gender: Citizenship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
On the third subscale, rule enforcement ($F = 23.943, p = .000$), a low mean indicates that residents appreciate the need for order in the living unit, perceive residence hall policies and regulations as reasonable and appropriate, and perceive that rules are fairly and equitably applied. Although the illustration in Figure 4 shows a 2-way interaction, a simple effects test does not reveal a critical difference among the four groups.

![Figure 4. Two Way Interaction: Rule Enforcement](image-url)
Two-Way Interaction: Type and Location

In the type and location interaction, five sub-scales showed significant differences. Citizenship ($F = 5.678, p = .017$), Residential Involvement ($F = 6.212, p = .013$), Privacy ($F = 3.893, p = .049$), Student Input ($F = 5.235, p = .022$), and Stimulation ($F = 18.104, p = .000$). However, a follow-up WSD shows no simple effects in the citizenship, residential involvement, and privacy subscales.

A low mean on the citizenship subscale indicates that students perceive that their peers are concerned about each other’s welfare, invested in the institution, and committed to providing service to the community. Figure 3 shows students in residential learning communities as perceive their living environment to be more citizenship oriented.

![Figure 5. Two-Way Interaction: Citizenship](image-url)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
A low mean on the residential involvement subscale indicates that residents share a sense of personal identification with the unit and are active participants in the unit's activities. Figure 6 reveals that students' living in residential learning communities on-campus perceive their living environment as allowing a high level of residential involvement.

![Figure 6. Two-Way Interaction: Residential Involvement](image)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
A low mean on the privacy subscale indicates that residents perceive the facilities in their living environments as configured so there is freedom from intrusion and residents respect each other's requests for personal time and space. Figure 7 illustrates that traditional residence hall students living on-campus perceive the greatest sense of privacy.

Figure 7. Two-Way Interaction: Privacy
A low mean on the student input scale indicates that residents perceive they have a voice and exert influence in the operation of the living unit, have freedom to express candid opinions, and are consulted when important decisions are made within the unit. Figure 8 illustrates the 2-way interaction. The simple effect test (Table 10) shows that students living in on-campus residential learning communities have feel they have a higher level of student input than the other three groups.

Table 10

| Simple Effect of Location and Type: Student Input |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                | On-Campus       | Off-Campus      | Location        |
| Mean            | 2.34            | 2.42            | Residential Learning Community |
| Location        | 2.43            | 2.44            | Traditional Residence Hall |

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
A low mean on the stimulation subscale indicates that students' perceive the living unit as intellectually and socially exciting and that students are enthusiastic about unit-sponsored activities, perceive other residents as interesting, and find social interactions stimulating. Figure 9 shows the 2-way interaction. The simple effects test (Table 11) shows that students living in on-campus residential learning communities have the highest level of stimulation among the four independent groups.

![Figure 9. Two-Way Interaction: Stimulation](image)

Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential Learning Community</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Residence Hall</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-Campus</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-Campus</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9. Two-Way Interaction: Stimulation

Table 11

Simple Effect of Location and Type: Stimulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential Learning Community</td>
<td>1.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Residence Hall</td>
<td>2.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-Campus</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-Campus</td>
<td>2.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A   A   A
Two-Way Interaction: Type and Gender

In the type and gender interaction, Student Input ($F = 4.529, p = .034$) was the only significant subscale. A low mean on that student input scale indicates that residents perceive they have a voice and exert influence in the operation of the living unit, have freedom to express candid opinions, and are consulted when important decisions are made within the unit. Figure 10 reveals that men living in residential learning communities perceive their living environment to have the highest level of student input. However, a follow-up WSD does not reveal any simple effects among the independent groups.

![Figure 10. Two-Way Interaction: Student Input](image)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Main Effect: Type

In the type main effect, significant differences exist in the Tolerance of Diversity subscale ($F = 14.455, p = .022$). A low mean on the tolerance of diversity subscales indicates that students respect individual differences, eschew stereotypes based on ethnicity and sexual orientation, and have amicable interactions. Students living in residential learning communities report their living environment to be more tolerant of diversity than those students in traditional residence halls.

![Figure 11. Main Effect: Tolerance of Diversity](image-url)
Main Effect: Location

Location had significant effects on the Emotional Support ($F = 5.170, p = .023$), Staff Support ($F = 10.278, p = .001$), and Tolerance of Diversity ($F = 27.672, p = .000$) subscales.

A low mean on the emotional support subscale indicates that students' perceive others as willing to offer understanding, assistance, and encouragement in times of need. On-campus students perceive their living environment to be more emotionally supportive than off-campus students (see Figure 12).

![Figure 12. Main Effect: Emotional Support](image-url)
A high score on the staff support subscale indicates that students' perceive that staff members are approachable, show care and concern for individuals' welfare, and are knowledgeable and readily available. Figure 13 illustrates that on-campus students perceive staff to be more supportive than students in off-campus facilities.
A low mean on the tolerance of diversity subscales indicates that students’ respect individual differences, eschew stereotypes based on ethnicity and sexual orientation, and have amicable interactions. Students living off-campus report their living environment to be more tolerant of diversity than those students who live on-campus (see Figure 14).

![Figure 14. Main Effect: Tolerance of Diversity](image-url)
Main Effect: Gender

Gender had a significant effect on the Emotional Support subscale \( (F = 13.938, p = .000) \). A low mean on the emotional support subscale indicates that students' perceive others as willing to offer understanding, assistance, and encouragement in times of need. Female students perceive their living environment as more emotionally supportive than their male counterparts (see Figure 15).

![Figure 15. Main Effect: Emotional Support](image-url)
Analysis of Impact

The final question of this research study seeks to determine on which subscales independent groups differ most. To answer this question, only the effect sizes of subscales identified by the MANOVA as being significant were examined. To calculate the effect size, the following formula was used: Effect Size = Difference in Means / Standard Deviation of the Subscale. Table 12 identifies the subscale, the effect, and the effect size. Effect sizes range from .000 to .786. For example, the strongest interaction effect occurs on the rule enforcement subscale between men and women who live on-campus (.786).
Table 12

Subscale Effect Sizes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Effect Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rule Enforcement</td>
<td>On-Campus Male (M=2.26)</td>
<td>On-Campus Female (M=2.56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rule Enforcement</td>
<td>On-Campus Male (M=2.26)</td>
<td>Off-Campus Male (2.55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>On-Campus Male (M=2.25)</td>
<td>On-Campus Female (M=1.83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stimulation</td>
<td>On-Campus Residential Learning Community (M=2.35)</td>
<td>On-Campus Traditional Residence Hall (M=2.44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privacy</td>
<td>On-Campus Traditional Residence Hall (M=1.94)</td>
<td>Off-Campus Traditional Residence Hall (M=2.31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>On-Campus Female (M=1.83)</td>
<td>Off-Campus Female (M=2.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stimulation</td>
<td>On-Campus Residential Learning Community (M=1.89)</td>
<td>Off-Campus Residential Learning Community (M=2.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>On-Campus Female (M=2.20)</td>
<td>Off-Campus Female (M=2.37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Involvement</td>
<td>On-Campus Residential Learning Community (M=2.43)</td>
<td>Off-Campus Residential Learning Community (M=2.45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>On-Campus Male (M=2.20)</td>
<td>On-Campus Female (M=2.33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Input</td>
<td>Residential Learning Community Male (M=2.35)</td>
<td>Traditional Residence Hall Male (M=2.47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>On-Campus Male (M=2.33)</td>
<td>Off-Campus Male (M=2.35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privacy</td>
<td>On-Campus Residential Learning Community (M=2.09)</td>
<td>Off-Campus Residential Learning Community (M=2.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privacy</td>
<td>On-Campus Residential Learning Community (M=2.09)</td>
<td>On-Campus Traditional Residence Hall (M=1.90)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residential Involvement</th>
<th>On-Campus Residential Learning Community (M=2.43)</th>
<th>On-Campus Traditional Residence Hall (M=2.53)</th>
<th>0.260</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stimulation</td>
<td>On-Campus Traditional Residence Hall (M=2.16)</td>
<td>Off-Campus Traditional Residence Hall (M=2.06)</td>
<td>0.259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rule Enforcement</td>
<td>On-Campus Female (M=2.55)</td>
<td>Off-Campus Female (M=2.46)</td>
<td>0.254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Input</td>
<td>On-Campus Residential Learning Community (M=2.34)</td>
<td>On-Campus Traditional Residence Hall (M=2.44)</td>
<td>0.252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rule Enforcement</td>
<td>Off-Campus Male (M=2.55)</td>
<td>Off-Campus Female (M=2.46)</td>
<td>0.241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Input</td>
<td>On-Campus Residential Learning Community (M=2.34)</td>
<td>Off-Campus Residential Learning Community (M=2.43)</td>
<td>0.237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Input</td>
<td>Traditional Residence Hall Male (M=2.47)</td>
<td>Traditional Residence Hall Female (M=2.41)</td>
<td>0.202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Involvement</td>
<td>On-Campus Traditional Residence Hall (M=2.53)</td>
<td>Off-Campus Traditional Residence Hall (M=2.44)</td>
<td>0.164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Input</td>
<td>Residential Learning Community Male (M=2.35)</td>
<td>Residential Learning Community Female (M=2.41)</td>
<td>0.159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>On-Campus Male (M=2.25)</td>
<td>Off-Campus Male (M=2.20)</td>
<td>0.093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>Off-Campus Male (M=2.34)</td>
<td>Off-Campus Female (M=2.37)</td>
<td>0.080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stimulation</td>
<td>Off-Campus Residential Learning Community (M=2.09)</td>
<td>Off-Campus Traditional Residence Hall (M=2.06)</td>
<td>0.076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privacy</td>
<td>Off-Campus Residential Learning Community (M=2.27)</td>
<td>Off-Campus Traditional Residence Hall (M=2.31)</td>
<td>0.076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Input</td>
<td>On-Campus Traditional Residence Hall (M=2.44)</td>
<td>Off-Campus Traditional Residence Hall (M=2.42)</td>
<td>0.041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Input</td>
<td>Off-Campus Residential Learning Community (M=2.43)</td>
<td>Off-Campus Traditional Residence Hall (M=2.42)</td>
<td>0.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Input</td>
<td>Residential Learning Community Female (M=2.40)</td>
<td>Traditional Residence Hall Female (M=2.41)</td>
<td>0.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>Off-Campus Male (M=2.20)</td>
<td>Off-Campus Female (M=2.20)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Involvement</td>
<td>Off-Campus Residential Learning Community (M=2.45)</td>
<td>Off-Campus Traditional Residence Hall (M=2.45)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Using only the effects that MANOVA found as significant, thirty-two different interactions exist. Of these thirty-two interactions, eight had effect sizes greater than 0.5. These eight interactions exist on five difference subscales: competition, rule enforcement, stimulation, privacy, and stimulation. Table 13 shows the five subscales on which independent groups differ most. On the competition subscale, the greatest effect was between males who live on-campus and females who live on-campus. Females who live on-campus and females who live off-campus differed the most on the competition subscale. On the rule enforcement subscale two groups showed significant effects, the first between off-campus males and off-campus females, and second, between on-campus males and off-campus males. Significant effects exist between on-campus residential learning communities and on-campus traditional residence halls, and between on-and off-campus residential learning communities on the stimulation subscale. On-campus traditional residence halls students reported that privacy was more characteristic of their living environment than off-campus traditional residence hall students. And finally, females who live on-campus reported that citizenship was more characteristic of their living environment than females living off-campus.
Table 13

Greatest Effect Sizes Organized by Subscale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Effect Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>On-Campus Male</td>
<td>On-Campus Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>On-Campus Female</td>
<td>Off-Campus Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rule Enforcement</td>
<td>On-Campus Male</td>
<td>On-Campus Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rule Enforcement</td>
<td>On-Campus Male</td>
<td>Off-Campus Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stimulation</td>
<td>On-Campus Residential Learning Community</td>
<td>On-Campus Traditional Residence Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stimulation</td>
<td>On-Campus Residential Learning Community</td>
<td>Off-Campus Residential Learning Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privacy</td>
<td>On-Campus Traditional Residence Hall</td>
<td>Off-Campus Traditional Residence Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>On-Campus Female</td>
<td>Off-Campus Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Summary

Results of this study show that differences do exist between students living in residential learning communities and those living in traditional residence hall environments; however those differences are contingent upon the location of students' residence hall and gender. The MANOVA revealed complex relationships between the type of residence hall, residence hall location, and gender of students. The implications and further discussion of these findings are discussed in Chapter 5.
Chapter Five

Discussion

The primary purpose of this study was to explore differences in the perception of residential living experiences between students who live in residential learning communities and those living in traditional residence halls as measured by the Student Residence Environment Scales (SRES). These two groups were further disaggregated based on the location of their living environment, on- or off-campus, and their gender. The quality of experience was based on students' perception of their living environment assessed by the fourteen subscales on the SRES. Results of this study show that differences do exist between students living in residential learning communities and those living in traditional residence hall environments; however those differences are contingent upon the location of students' residence hall and gender. Location of residence hall and gender impact students' perceptions of their living environment in an interactive relationship with the type of residence hall.

The secondary purpose of this study was to determine on which of the fourteen SRES subscales students' perception of their living environment differed based on the type of residence hall they lived in, the location of their residence hall, and their gender. Findings showed significant interaction effects exist on thirteen of the fourteen SRES subscales. The final objective of this study was to assess on which of the subscales independent groups differ the most. My analysis identified five significant effect sizes.

This chapter will discuss the research findings, examine the limitations of this study, offer recommendations for future research, and assess the implications for practice.
Raw Means Analysis

This study found that students generally view their living environments positively. Mean scores on fourteen SRES subscales were organized and analyzed by type of residence hall, location of residence hall, and gender. Mean scores fell within a range of 1.00 to 4.00. A mean score of 1.00 to 2.49 defined the always true and almost always true range. Scores that fell within this range indicate that students perceived the characteristics of that particular subscale to be true or almost always true of their living environment. Mean scores from 2.5 to 4.00 defined the almost never true and never true range. Scores within this range indicated that characteristics of a particular subscale were almost never or never present in their living environment.

An interesting trend emerged in the raw means. Mean scores of all independent variable groups (type, location, and gender) fell into the almost always true range for twelve of the fourteen subscales. This pattern suggests that students, regardless of the type of residence hall environment they live in, location of their residence hall, or their gender, tend to view their residential living environment as possessing characteristics measured by the SRES.

Means for two subscales, mattering (Total M = 2.60) and tolerance of diversity (Total M = 2.78), both fell in the almost never true range. This result was consistent across residence hall type, location of residence hall, and gender. A high mean (never true or almost never true) on the mattering subscale indicated that residents tend not to perceive everyone as important and that accomplishments are not celebrated by the living unit. Furthermore, residents tend not to show concern for each other and lack appreciation for individuals' contributions. A high mean (never true or almost never
true) on the tolerance of diversity subscale indicated that residents tend to perceive students in their living environment as lacking respect for individual differences, use stereotypes based on ethnicity and sexual orientation, and do not have amicable interaction. A common characteristic shared by the mattering subscale and the tolerance of diversity subscale is that both scales measure a level of appreciation for individuals and their interactions with each other.

Finding that students tended not to identify characteristics of the mattering and tolerance of diversity scales as characteristics of their environment contradicts current programmatic and theory-based living models for students’ residential learning experience. Previous research supports the theory that students living in on-campus residential learning communities encourage positive interaction among residents related to diversity issues, share common interests and purposes, have a high degree of social interaction, and possess a social stability that ensures continuity of relationships (Blimling & Schuh. 1981: Kuh. Schuh. Whitt. & Associates. 1991; Blimling. 1993; Hughes. 1994: Pascarella et al., 1994). However, the relationships in this study are hampered by the absence of caring and respectful interactions.

**Understanding Interactions**

The results of this study are complex due to the multiple interactions of variables that impact students’ perceptions of their living environment. An interaction occurs when the effect of an independent variable on some dependent variable depends on the level of another independent variable. As shown in chapter four, significant findings were detected in the 3-way interaction, 2-way interactions, and main effects. In essence.
The main finding of this study is that students' perceptions of their residential living environments are impacted by the joint effects of more than one variable. Perceptions are influenced by the type of environment in which they live, the location of their living environment, and their gender, or interacting combinations of these variables.

In the existing research and theory about residential living communities, results tend to isolate variables and make assumptions about the impact of residential learning communities on students' experiences based on a one-dimensional finding. Therefore, interactive effects tend to be masked when all an observer sees is the main effect, as illustrated by comparing raw means and noting a lack of obvious differences among the subscales. For example, the results of a study comparing persistence rates of residential learning community students versus tradition residence hall students found that residential learning community students have a higher level of persistence (Schroeder and Berry, 1997). What that study did not identify were other variables such as socio-economic status, high school GPA, standardized test scores, and/or gender which might impact students' ability and drive to persist.

By using a multivariate analysis in this study the researcher was able to identify interactive effects among the three variables, thus creating a three-dimensional view of students' living experiences. Distinguishing such interactions allows for a greater insight into a specific population's experience, providing a foundation of information to further define and identify the needs of students in various living communities.
3-Way Interactions

The 3-way interaction is the most complex. The 3-way interaction showed a significant relationship between the three variables (type, location, and gender) for an individual subscale. Significant 3-way interactions were observed on three subscales: academic achievement, care of facilities, and cohesiveness. In essence, the independent variables only had interactive effects on these three subscales. If one of the independent variables was removed from the analysis, the interactions were no longer significant. For example, the academic achievement subscale did not show a significant interaction in any of the 2-way interactions (type and gender, gender and location, or type and location). The interaction effect on the academic achievement subscale is only significant when all three independent variables were present.

2-Way Interactions

Two-way interactions helped identify which population of students perceived a particular subscale as more true in their living environment than their counterpart population. Conducting these analyses provides opportunities for practitioners to understand the experiences of a particular population. Detailed below are all 2-way interactions identified in this study.

On-campus female students tend to perceive their living environment to be more competitive and more concerned about each other’s welfare (competition and citizenship subscales), while on-campus males tend to be more appreciative of order in their living environment and see rules and regulations as reasonable and appropriate (rule enforcement subscale). On-campus residential learning community students tend to be...
more concerned about individuals' welfare, have a greater sense of personal identification with their living unit, feel their input and influence is important, and feel stimulated by their environment more so than their on- and off-campus traditional residence hall and off-campus residential learning community counterparts (citizenship, residential involvement, student input, and stimulations subscales). On-campus traditional residence hall students tend to perceive their living environment to be more private than any other population (privacy subscale). Residential learning community males tend to feel they have a higher level of influence in their living unit and have more freedom to voice their views (student input subscales).

Current literature does not break down results to this detailed level of interaction, thus presenting a challenge to relate findings in this study to previous norms. Yet having this level of detail could give practitioners a clearer understanding about the unique experiences of a particular sub-group. By understanding the perception of individual sub-groups, residence life organizations can use this information to develop group specific programs goals to enhance aspects of the living experience. This information can also be used as a marketing tool for specific populations to encourage participation in particular living experiences.

Main Effects

Main effects identify the impact of a single independent variable on one or more dependent variables. This information allows each independent variable to be viewed in isolation. While student's lives and actual examples of interactions are very complex, the examination of each variable independently, defines elementary differences between
groups. This individual comparison provides a broader look at the independent variable differences, which may serve as a starting point for practitioners to use the findings in this study. By looking at the broad outcomes, then funneling down to the specific differences between populations may be the most practical approach in making these outcomes useful.

This study found five significant main effects, which are identified below. The residential learning community students tend to perceive their environment to be more tolerant of diversity than traditional residence hall students (tolerance of diversity subscale). On-campus students' perceive their environment to be more emotionally supportive and have a greater level of staff support than off-campus students (staff support and emotional support subscales), while off-campus students perceive their environment to be more tolerant of diversity (tolerance of diversity subscale). Additionally, female students feel more emotionally supported than male students (emotional support subscale).

The findings from these main effects create an interesting dilemma regarding tolerance of diversity. On one hand, as research suggests, residential learning communities do show greater gains in openness to diversity than traditional residence hall students (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1980, 1981). Yet off-campus students appeared to be more tolerant of diversity than on-campus students, which contradicts recent research that supports the opposite (Pike, 2002). This dichotomy could be attributed to the off-campus environment used in this study. The privately-owned, off-campus residence hall is not consistent with the definition of off-campus used in most research studies. Typically, “off-campus” refers to private dwellings, such as apartments or houses that do not have
an intentional programmatic theme. The “off-campus” issue is further discussed in the limitation section of this chapter. It was expected that on-campus students would perceive their environment as more supportive based on findings that report on-campus students have a greater level of interaction with faculty, staff, and peers (Astin, 1993; Blimling, 1993; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Terenzini, Pascarella & Blimling, 1999). Because specific research related to gender in residential environments is somewhat lacking, the finding that women feel more supported than men is not surprising given the goals of residential living environments and women’s overall inclination to gravitate toward more emotionally supportive situations.

**Effect Size**

Determining the magnitude of differences between individual populations on specific subscales provides a clearer view of the relative strength of individual populations’ view their living environments. An analysis of the effect size was conducted to identify the relative size of the obtained differences. Effect sizes range from .000 to 1.0. The closer an effect size is to 1.0, the greater the difference is between the variables being compared. An effect size of 0.2 indicates a small effect, 0.5 indicates a medium effect, and 0.8 indicates a large effect. Effect sizes for all subscales showing significant interactions were calculated and five effects had effect sizes above a 0.7, thus, indicating a larger difference between two specific populations. Those significant effects are further identified below.

- Between on-campus males and on-campus females on the rule enforcement subscale (effect size .786). On-campus males reported more rule enforcement.
- Between on-campus males and off-campus males on the rule enforcement subscale (effect size .773), on-campus males reported more rule enforcement.
- Between on-campus males and on-campus females on the competition subscale (effect size .758), on-campus females reported more competition.
- Between on-campus residential learning communities and on-campus traditional residence halls on the stimulation subscale (effect size .722), on-campus residential learning communities reported more stimulation.
- Between on-campus traditional residence hall students and off-campus traditional residence hall on the privacy subscale (effect size .709), on-campus traditional residence hall reported more privacy.

**Mattering**

The independent variables (type, location, and gender) had no effect on the mattering subscale. The mattering subscale indicates that residents perceive everyone to be important in the living unit, accomplishments are celebrated by the living unit, and residents show concern for each other and appreciate everyone's contributions.

The fact that mattering did not appear to be significant in any interaction, and that the raw mean score fell in the almost never true range, contradicts literature that supports mattering as an important part of the residential learning community experience, and its presumed place as a core element in many student development theories (Schlossberg, 1989; Schroeder, 1994). The noteworthiness of mattering in this study is its absence.

According to Schlossberg (1989) when students feel they matter, learning increases. Based on the findings of this study, mattering is not a characteristic of the living
communities assessed. A natural follow-up is to examine the level of learning taking place within each living community. Unfortunately, individual students’ grade point averages were not available for this study to test Schlossberg’s theory. Another consideration is how students in this study perceive mattering compared to students overall on this campus or nationally. Because a norm does not exist for any of the subscales in this study, it is difficult to make concrete statements about the impact of mattering in living environments. For example, if a norm did exist for the mattering subscale, and students in this study compared equally to the norm, the concern over mattering not having an impact may be a moot point. On the other hand, if students in this study felt they mattered less than the national norm then that may identify a significant issue with this population.

Tolerance of Diversity

The tolerance of diversity subscale also presents an interesting issue in this study. As discussed earlier in this chapter, off-campus living environments and residential learning communities reported their living communities to be more tolerant of diversity. Also, the overall means for tolerance of diversity fell into the almost never true range for all groups studied. This could be cause for alarm according to studies that report students living on-campus and in residential learning communities are more open to diversity. Addressing the issue with the location of residence halls, the off-campus population in this study lives in a privately-owned residence hall facility that is more expensive than living on-campus. An assumption could be made that the off-campus residence hall is more homogeneous and therefore less opportunity for conflict surrounding issues of
diversity exist. Whereas, on-campus, the student population is more diverse economically, socially, and geographically, which could create an atmosphere that would lend itself to more conflict, thus seeming less tolerant of diversity. Residential learning communities could have a similar trait to the off-campus population in that they are more homogeneous than the traditional residence hall environment. Students with similar interests self-select into residential learning communities. The common interest would make the population more similar than different, therefore creating an atmosphere that is comfortable and possess less opportunity for to conflict. As with the mattering subscale, a norm for how students perceive tolerance of diversity using this subscale is not available, therefore an assumption about this population cannot be made in comparison to other students nationally. Diversity is a politically sensitive issue on most college campuses, therefore, generalizations about students' perception of diversity based on the results of this study should be kept in the context of this study.

Limitations

Although these findings suggest several interesting possibilities, care should be taken not to over-generalize the results. Because the current research was conducted at a single institution, and residential learning communities are not standardized across institutions, generalizing to residential learning communities at other institutions is difficult. The results of this study are limited to institutions with large residential populations, and they may be limited to large research universities. In addition, the results represent a snapshot in time. Had the SRES been distributed at a different time during the academic year, it is possible that the effects identified in this study would have
been different. The fact that students self-select into residential learning communities represent a third potential limitation of this research. Another caution regarding residential learning community studies is that regardless of the study design, it is difficult to account for students' backgrounds and experiences outside the residential learning community environment. Therefore, perceptions of their environment or experience cannot be solely attributed to the learning community.

The difference in the definition of "off-campus" in this research study is an important consideration when reviewing results and comparing outcomes to previous research findings. In order to accurately examine students' perceptions based on their residence hall location readers need to be reminded that the off-campus facility in this study is a privately owned and operated residence hall with an intentional residential life focus, outside of university property. Most existing research defines off-campus students as students who commute to campus and do not live in a facility that has a formal residence program. (Blimling, 1993, 1999). Therefore, outcomes and characteristics in previous research regarding off-campus students may not fully be applicable to the off-campus student population in this study.

The SRES is a 150-item survey with multiple dependent variables. The survey is long and some students might find it cumbersome, which could impact the response rate. In the case of this study, participating in the survey was voluntary, so students may have chosen not to invest the time to answer the lengthy survey in a thoughtful manner. Additionally, this study measures students' perceptions. Although students' perceptions are a fascinating and telling way to gather information, perceptions can differ on a particular topic on any given day, based on what is happening in the lives of the students.
Care needs to be taken in the time of year the survey is distributed and the means by which participation is solicited. Despite these apparent limitations, the reliability estimates for the SRES indicated a high level of reliability (Winston, 2003). Although the reliability is high, due to the lack of previous research using this instrument, norms do not exist for responses. Therefore, it is difficult to determine if responses by this student population are typical or atypical compared to students who reside in similar living environments. Additionally, scores on individual subscales have not been directly correlated to concrete gains in learning, involvement, and persistence as reported by previous studies as characteristics of residential learning communities.

Despite these limitations related to the design and instrumentation used in this study, the researcher believes that this study provides an acceptably accurate and comprehensive view of the residential learning experience of students at one institution. More importantly, the multivariate analysis employed presents a more sophisticated way to look at the multiple variables and their relationship to students’ residential living experience that has been attempted in existing literature.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The findings of this study have important implications for research, theory, and practice in residential life organizations. The SRES is a relatively under-utilized instrument. Only one published study using the survey exists. Replicating this research design on several campuses would establish norms and provide trend data useful in building residential learning community theory. The survey should be replicated at the institution used in this study and results should be compared to these data and mapped.
back to programmatic goals to see if students’ perceptions have changed over time and/or due to programmatic changes. Essentially, this study should be used as a baseline by which to assess future changes to the program. To create a richer analysis, qualitative methods should be coupled with the survey to further explore the living environments, which might further illuminate the complex relationship among the variables.

Another suggested area for research is exploring the difference between university-owned residence halls and privately-owned residence halls. Private residence halls have become more common at colleges and universities around the country. It would be interesting to discover which living experience, on-campus university-owned or off-campus privately-owned, offers the greater value-added residential living experience. Should a difference not be found or should that private residence hall students’ be more positive, universities may realize that privatization offers more legitimate options for managing residence halls. If a university could outsource their residence hall management and continue to provide students with an overall positive experience, the university may receive benefit from a financial and operations perspective.

Regardless of the instrumentation used, residential life programs should have an assessment plan for their department. Thorough and continuous assessment of students’ residential learning experiences will provide sound information on which to base programmatic goals and justify financial resources to constituents.

**Implications for Practice**

The development and support of residential learning communities demand a large commitment of personnel and fiscal resources by an institution. The results of this study...
do show that differences exist between residential learning communities and traditional residence hall communities, but it remains unclear as to how distinct these experiences really are and if the cost of the program is equal to the value it provides. This study also shows that students' perception of their experience is not only based on whether they live in residential learning communities or traditional residence halls, the location of their hall as well as their gender impact their perceptions and presumably their experience.

Continued assessment of current residence hall programs and re-examination of goals based on the assessment results could lead to more focused programmatic efforts to meet intended outcomes.

Results of this study could be used in very different and even competitive ways. Because findings did not identify a clear and absolute "best" living environment, both the residence life team and the people who manage the private off-campus residence hall could find evidence in this study to support living in their respective living environments. Also, with so many different subscales, determining which subscale(s) is most important is somewhat subjective. For example, the university residence life team might hone in on the stimulation subscale results which show that on-campus residential learning communities are perceived to be more stimulating that off-campus residential learning communities and on – and off – campus traditional residence halls. Marketing could be created around the stimulating residence hall community environment. The competition subscale is another subscale that could be viewed in two difference ways. One view might see a high level of competition healthy and academically motivating for students. Another view perhaps is that a highly competitive environment does not foster a cohesive learning environment and too much competition could be harmful. The point is, because
results of this study cannot be compared to norms of this instrument, and because a low or high mean cannot be correlated with actual characteristics of the residential learning experience, the results of this study cannot fully support either the continuation or elimination of residential learning communities.

Although the findings do not absolutely support the elimination or continuation of residential learning communities, practitioners should ask themselves some hard questions about the residential living experience on their campus. If residential learning communities do not offer a different or unique experience for students, why should they continue? Is the experience that residential life programs are creating for all on-campus students a richer, programmatically focused environment that eliminates the need for special learning community programs? And how do residential life programs account for the differences in their student population (i.e. gender, race, socio-economic status) when establishing their mission and goals, and designing programs to meet those goals?

Considering the elimination of residential learning communities may be a radical departure from current reasoning about campus environments. However, could the dollars and hours spent by residential life organizations to create residential learning communities create a greater value for all students by redirecting efforts to traditional residence hall environments? Current efforts directed residential living communities and traditional residence halls show that both experiences show positive outcomes, but could resources be directed at the whole to create a more distinct experiences for all students?
Conclusion

The general hypothesis of this study was that a difference in perception of living environment exists between students living in residential learning communities and traditional residence hall settings, as well as among students’ perceptions based on the location of their living environment, on- or off-campus, and their gender. The results of this study show that independent variables (type, location, gender) produced interacting effects on the dependent variables (SRES subscales).

Students’ perceptions of their living environments are jointly impacted by the type of residential living community in which they reside, the location of their residence hall and their gender on most of the SRES subscales. Based on the results of the statistical analysis, a complex relationship exists between the type of residence hall, residence hall location, and gender. However, students’ perceptions of their living environment cannot be attributed to any one variable.

Knowing that these contingencies, and probably others, significantly affect students’ perceptions of their experiences, colleges and universities need to be more purposeful and focused on individual differences whey they create a residential learning community program. While many of these programs have been started to meet a certain academic or environmental need, this research study has shown that student experiences do not drastically differ from those in traditional residential environments. Thus, colleges and universities should decide if their resources are best spent serving a few students by improving residential learning communities or assuring the positive residential experiences of a larger population of college students living in traditional residence halls.
Campus life is an important element of students overall college experience. So attention and effort should be expended to improve these experiences for all.
Appendix A

On-Campus Student Individual Data Sheet

Section Instructions: Student Residential Environment Survey

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this seven minute survey for the Department of Housing and Residential Education. The purpose of the Student Residential Environment Survey (SRES) is to describe your student living environment. Information gathered with this questionnaire can be used to gain a better understanding of students living experience. This information, however, will be useful only if you respond thoughtfully and honestly.

Please use these definitions when answering the questions.
The term living unit is defined as the residence hall community (floor, hall, wing, Theme House program, or building) in which you live.
Staff refers to all the personnel employed to work with students or provide services, for example, housing administrators, Office Assistants, and Housekeepers.
Student Staff refers to graduate or undergraduate students who hold part-time, paid positions in the residence halls with titles such as Resident Advisor, Office Assistant, Office Manager, Graduate Mentor, or Assistant Area Director.
Professional staff members are Housing and Residential Education staff, including Area Directors, Assistant Directors, and the department Director.

Please do not omit any statements. Your complete participation will illuminate information regarding your living environment. Your questions about this survey can be address to: housing_survey@unc.edu. Again, thank you and good luck with your studies.

Begin by providing demographic information requested below.
Section Demographic Information

Q 1.

Indicate your residence hall.

☐ Alderman
☐ Alexander
☐ Avery
☐ Aycock
Carmichael
Cobb
Connor
Craige
Ehringhaus
Everett
Graham
Grimes
Hinton James
Joyner
Kenan
Lewis
Mangum
Manly
McIver
Morrison
Odum Village
Old East
Old West
Parker
Ruffin
Spencer
Stacy
Q. 1a

Indicate your living unit.

- Academic Enhancement Program
- First Year Initiative
- French House
- German House
- Health Sciences
- Living Well
- Spanish House
- Substance-free
- UNITAS
- Womens' Perspectives
- Regular Residence Hall
- Other

Q. 2

What is your current class standing for 2001-2002?

- First Year Student
- Sophomore
Q. 3
What is your Gender?

☐ Female

☐ Male

Q. 4
How many semesters have you resided in your current living unit at the end of the Spring 2002 semester?

☐ 1 semester

☐ 2 semesters

☐ 3 semesters

☐ 4 semesters

☐ 5 semesters

☐ 6 semesters

☐ 7 semesters

☐ 8 or more semesters
Q. 5.

What initially attracted you to your current living unit?

Choose the strongest one.

- Friends in the community.
- Location of the community.
- Increase in academic connections.
- Increase in faculty interactions.
- Parents wanted me in the community.
- Meet diverse people.
- Amenities of the community (i.e. A/C, computer lab)
- Make friends.
- Substance free.
- Sounded fun.
- Other

Q. 5a.

If other, please indicate:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

5b. Please rate the following statements based on the following scale:

▼ Strongly Agree ▼ Agree ▼ Neutral ▼ Disagree ▼ Strongly Disagree
This program/community has supported my academic pursuits at Carolina.

This program/community has met my expectations for programming.

This program/community has met my expectations for community involvement.

This program/community has assisted me in meeting personal goals.

I like the size of my program/community.

I like the interaction with other students in the program/community.

I had frequent interaction with faculty.

My grades are higher because I live in this program/community.

I attended performing arts events this year.

6. Are you returning to your community for the 2002-2003 academic year?
   
   ○ Yes
   
   ○ No
Appendix B

Off-Campus Student Individual Data Sheet

Section Instructions: Student Residential Environment Survey

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey. The purpose of the Student Residential Environment Survey (SRES) is to describe your student living environment. Information gathered with this questionnaire can be used to gain a better understanding of students' living experience. This information, however, will be useful only if you respond thoughtfully and honestly.

Please use these definitions when answering the questions.
The term living unit is defined as the residence hall community in which you live. Staff refers to all the personnel employed to work with residents or provide services, for example, office staff, Dining Services, Maintenance, and Housekeeping. Student Staff refers to graduate or undergraduate students who hold part-time, paid positions in the residence halls with titles such as resident assistant or desk assistant. Professional staff members are Tower Manager or Granville Management staff.

Please do not omit any statements. You will be given an opportunity to sign-up for the prizes once you complete all the items and click "Click here to exit survey" below. Again thank you and good luck with your studies.

Begin by providing demographic information requested below.

Section Demographic Information

Q1. Indicate your residence hall.
   - Granville East
   - Granville South
   - Granville West

Q. 1a If applicable, indicate your living unit.
   - Regular Residence Hall
   - Academic Hall
   - All Female Hall
   - Substance-free
   - Other

Q. 2 What is your current class standing for 2001-2002?
Q. 3
What is your Gender?
- Female
- Male

Q. 4
How many semesters have you resided in your current living unit at the end of the Spring 2002 semester?
- 1 semester
- 2 semesters
- 3 semesters
- 4 semesters
- 5 semesters
- 6 semesters
- 7 semesters
- 8 or more semesters

Q. 5.
What initially attracted you to your current living unit?
Choose the strongest one.
- Friends in the community.
- Location of the community.
- Increase in academic connections.
- Increase in faculty interactions.
- Parents wanted me in the community.
- Meet diverse people.
- Amenities of the community (i.e. A/C, computer lab)
- Make friends.
- Substance free.
- Sounded fun.
- Other

Q. 5a.
If other, please indicate:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
6. Are you returning to Granville Towers for the 2002-2003 academic year?

☐ Yes
☐ No
Appendix C

Student Residence Environment Scales Survey

Q. Part I

Please select the level of truth for each item.

▼ Never ▼ Seldom True ▼ Often True ▼ Always (almost always) true

- Common areas in my living unit (for example, halls and study rooms) are kept clean.
- It is impossible to escape other residents' scrutiny in this living unit.
- Residents can get privacy when they need it in this living unit.
- Residents in this living unit do not care how the place looks.
- There is no place a resident can be alone in this living unit.
- Residents in this living unit feel as they are living in a glass house.
- The rooms in this living unit are kept in good condition.
- Residents in this living unit are careful not to invade each others' privacy.
- Bathrooms are clean and sanitary.
- Residents in this living unit are too noisy.
- The furniture in this living unit is in poor condition.
- When asked, residents respect each others need to be alone.
- Residents are embarrassed to bring guests or relatives to this living unit because of its appearance.
- There is a lot of graffiti and/or clutter in this living unit.
- Residents can study in their rooms without interruption.
- This living unit has a bad odor.
- Insects and other pests are controlled.

Q. Part II

Please select the level of truth for each item.

▼ Never ▼ Seldom True ▼ Often True ▼ Always (almost always) true

- Residents have friendships with students from different racial/ethnic backgrounds.
- Residents in this living unit stick together.
- Interesting things happen in this living unit.
- People in this living unit are competitive with each other.
- Everyone gets involved in the living units activities.
- Students in this living unit ignore some residents ideas.
- Residents in this living unit rally around students who are having a difficult time.
- Residents from minority racial/ethnic groups hang out only with each other.
Residents in this living unit look out for each other.
Interesting people live in this unit.
It is difficult to get residents to do anything together.
In this living unit, there are hostile exchanges between individuals from majority and minority racial/ethnic groups.
Residents in this living unit eat meals together.
People talk about interesting or unusual topics in this living unit.
There are residents in this living unit whom others avoid or ignore.
Residents can be counted on to keep information about each other confidential.
A person's religious beliefs affect how well she/he is accepted in the living unit.
Residents in this living unit can depend on each other to come through in a pinch.
Residents have a lot of laughs in this living unit.
People who live in this unit will go to considerable lengths to win.
Programs and/or social activities planned for the living unit draw a good crowd.
Residents of this living unit show interest in what each other are doing.
Residents who are suspected/known to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual are ostracized.
Groups of residents in this living unit go out together to have fun.
Residents compete with each other in terms of how they dress.
The individual successes of residents in this living unit go unrecognized.
A person's sexual orientation is the most important factor in determining how residents relate to him/her.
Residents in this living unit are like members of a family.
Fun activities occur in this living unit.
Residents compete with each other from dates.
Residents likes/dislikes are taken into account by others in the unit.
When residents have problems, they get help from other residents.
Residents in this living unit are tolerant of people who act a little weird.
Residents in this living unit like each other.
This living unit is a boring place to live.
People in this living unit compete with each other for the spotlight.
Residents in this living unit want to get involved in residence life programs and activities.
Individual accomplishments by living-unit residents are celebrated by the whole unit.
Residents in the living unit try to help roommates solve their problems.
Residents have a hard time tolerating each other's point of view.
It is every person for himself/herself in this living unit.
Enjoyable social activities are sponsored by the living unit.
There are arguments among residents in this living unit about who won games or contests.
Residents view living-unit activities as rinky-dink or juvenile.
When a resident does something for the living unit, her/his contribution is ignored or minimized by other in the unit.
Residents in this living unit get together just to talk about what is going on in their lives.

Members of this living unit try to outdo each other.

Residents in this living unit, other than student staff, initiate activities.

A resident can always find someone to listen to his/her problems in this living unit.

Residents of this living unit who hold unconventional ideas are ridiculed.

Differences among residents in this living unit are overwhelming.

There is a lot of group spirit among the residents in this living unit.

There is a lot going on in this living unit.

Members of this living unit compare who has the best stuff (for example, stereos, clothes, and computers).

It is difficult to find volunteers to help with programs and/or social activities in this living unit.

There are residents in this living unit whom others in the unit do not know.

Students in this living unit use racial slurs.

People who live in this unit are energetic.

People in this living unit compare grades.

The residents of this living unit do not care what happens to each other.

Some residents feel left out of the conversations in this living unit.

Q. Part III

Please select the level of truth for each item.

Never ▼ Seldom True ▼ Often True ▼ Always (almost always) true

Making good grades is emphasized in this living unit.

Residents fulfill their obligations as responsible members of the living unit.

Residents pull their fair share of the load in this living unit.

Daily, residents in this living unit spend extended periods of time on their studies.

Residents are committed to making the living unit a better place to live.

Residents who spend lots of time studying are the butt of jokes in this living unit.

Residents take their college/campus citizenship duties (for example, voting in campus elections, serving on committees) seriously.

Academics are the first priority for residents in this living unit.

Community service is valued by residents of this living unit.

Residents in this living unit are interested in doing the minimum necessary academically.

In this living unit, it is difficult to fill leadership positions.

Residents encourage each other to get good grades.

This living unit is characterized by a pitch in and help attitude.

People in this living unit need to be more concerned with classroom learning.

Residents of this living unit participate in volunteer activities, for example, blood drives, food drives, and recycling.
• Residents academic achievements are publicly recognized in this living unit.
• Residents are unconcerned about global issues, such as pollution, human rights, and starvation.
• Residents who excel academically are admired by others in this living unit.

Q. Part IV
Please select the level of truth for each item.

▼ Never ▼ Seldom True ▼ Often True ▼ Always (almost always) true

• Dumb rules in this living unit unnecessarily complicate life.
• Residents have no say in how the living unit is run.
• Residents understand the rationale behind rules and policies in this living unit.
• Staff listen when students have something to say about living conditions.
• Residents in this living unit get into trouble because they did not know the rules.
• Residents opinions are solicited before major decisions are made in this living unit.
• Residents assume the responsibility for enforcing the rules and policies on which the living unit decides.
• There are channels available for residents to express their opinions.
• The rules in this living unit are unreasonable.
• Residents who have new ideas about how to do things are ignored.
• Residents ignore this living unit's rules and policies.
• Residents prefer to complain rather than to take the initiative to change things.
• Rule enforcement in this living unit is done selectively -- favoring some people over others.
• Red tape prevents making change in this living unit.
• It is difficult not to violate this living units rules because there are so many of them.
• Residents feel free to voice their concerns.
• The rules are unclear in this living unit.
• Residents participate in evaluating staff.
• Residents accused of violating rules receive a fair hearing.

Q. Part V
Please select the level of truth for each item.

▼ Never ▼ Seldom True ▼ Often True ▼ Always (almost always) true

• Student staff are unavailable when they are needed.
• The student staff in this living unit really care about the residents who live here.
• The professional staff show an interest in the welfare of individual residents.
• The student staff are poor sources of accurate, reliable information.
• The staff cares more about enforcing rules than they do about helping residents.
• The student staff provides useful service or assistance to the residents in this living unit.
• When staff are asked, they can be counted on to help residents.
• The professional staff is available to residents in this living unit.
- Residents find it difficult to talk to staff members.
- Staff in the living unit know what they are doing.
- The student staff in this living unit offer to help residents deal with their personal/private concerns.
References


[Educational benchmarking study, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill].

Unpublished raw data.


Jahr, P.K. (1988). “To arms...to arms.” *Journal of College and University Student*
Housing. 18. 8-10.


Lehmann, I. (1963). Changes in critical thinking, attitudes, and values from freshman to

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
senior years. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 54*, 305–315.


Prusok, R.E., & Walsh, W. B. (1964). College Student Residence and Academic

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.


Vita

Jennifer Benson Jones

Birthday: May 23, 1970

Birthplace: Mankato, Minnesota

Education:

Charleston, Illinois
Master of Education

1988 – 1992 Mankato State University
Mankato, Minnesota
Bachelor of Science